



Applicant: BADEY J. Coe
Serial No. 09/879,419
September 25, 2002
Page 5 of 11

RECEIVED
OCT 02 2002
GROUP 3600

Claims 1, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 17-19 have been amended. No new matter has been inserted. Claims 1-21 remain pending in the application. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the Examiner's rejections.

Claims 1-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Dennington. Applicant respectfully traverses such rejection. Dennington requires separate snap hooks 90 for attaching the fail-safe lanyard 88 to hooks of lanyard 20 and harness 12. Additionally, Applicant's independent claims now state that the first end of the body member is removably attached to the second end of the body member for connecting the first member to the second member. Dennington fails to teach this feature. The ends of lanyard 88, with or without snap hooks 90, are not attached to each other for connecting lanyard 20 to harness 12. Dependent claims 7, 8, 12, 13, 18 and 19 now claim that portions of the body member are disposed within openings of the items to be connected when the first end of the body member is attached to the second end of the body member. Dennington also fails to teach this feature. Additionally, claims 10 and 17 now state that the tab is a non-metal tab. Snap hook 90, referred to by the Examiner as a tab, is constructed from a metal material.

Furthermore, one would not use the device in Dennington for connecting parachute suspension lines or parachute bridle cords. The life threatening dangers and risks are readily apparent.

Applicant: Bill J. Coe
Serial No. 09/879,419
September 25, 2002
Page 6 of 11

Dennington is merely a fail-safe emergency device, not a primary attachment device. In fact, Dennington specifically states that the failure of the primary attachment mechanism is "unlikely" (Col. 6, line 33). Additionally, the desired length and use of lanyard 88 would be negated by attaching the ends of lanyard 88 to each other. Thus, Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's statement that Dennington could be used for such purposes.

Applicant also wishes to bring to the Examiner's attention of the Federal Circuit's decision in In re Mills, 916 F.2d 680, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d 2d. 1430 (Fed. Cir. 1990), which states that the Examiner must afford patentable weight to functional limitations in the claims.

Applicant also respectfully submits that the Dennington reference fails as a proper '103 reference under the non-analogous art test of the Federal Circuit. To rely on a reference under 35 U.S.C. § 103, it must be analogous prior art.

"In order to rely on a reference as a basis for rejection of an applicant's invention, the reference must either be in the field of applicant's endeavor or, if not, then be reasonably pertinent to the particular problem with which the inventor was concerned."

In re Oetiker, 977 F.2d 1443, 1446, 24 U.S.P.Q.2d 1443, 1445 (Fed. Cir. 1992). The Dennington patent relates to a safety harness/lanyard assembly worn to protect people from injury upon

Applicant: Bill J. Coe
Serial No. 09/879,419
September 25, 2002
Page 7 of 11

failing from elevated structures such as buildings, scaffolding, marine oil rigs, and elevated structures. The lanyard is attached at one end to the safety harness and at the other end to the elevated structure. Dennington is not in the field of parachutes and canopies. The object of the Dennington patent was to provide an improved safety harness assembly which includes a resilient member to absorb impact loads imposed on the lanyard and harness. Applicant's invention solves the problems of prior connector links requiring sewing and tools for attachment. Additionally, prior links were not reusable and also contained metal hardware. Applicant's invention was directed to overcoming all of these shortcomings of prior links. Dennington is not concerned with any of these shortcomings. In fact, Dennington's snap hooks and rings are constructed from metal. Accordingly, Dennington fails both portions of the Federal Circuit for analogous art.

In view of the above, Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection of claims 1-21 under Section 103(a) as allegedly obvious over Dennington.

Applicant has completely responded to the Office Action dated June 25, 2002.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current Amendment. The first page of the attached pages is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made".



Applicant: Bill Coe
Serial No. 09/879,419
September 25, 2002
Page 8 of 11

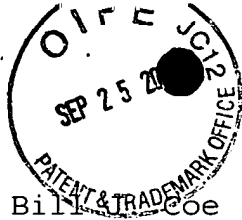
If there are any additional charges, including extension of time, please bill our Deposit Account No. 13-1130.

Respectfully submitted,

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I:\7282\Amend\4820 (2ndAmend-SoftLink)

RECEIVED
OCT 02 2002
GROUP 3600



Applicant: Bill & Coe
Serial No. 09/879,419
September 25, 2002
Page 9 of 11

RECEIVED
OCT 02 2002
GROUP 3600

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) A soft link for connecting a first member to a second member, said soft link comprising:

a one-piece flexible body member having a permanently looped first end and a second end; wherein said first end and said second end are removably attached to each other to connect the first member to the second member.

7. (Amended) The soft link of claim 1 wherein the first member is a group of parachute suspension lines and said second member is a riser; wherein a first portion of said body member is disposed within a first opening defined by the group of parachute suspension lines and a second portion of said body member is disposed within a second opening defined by the riser when said first end is attached to said second end.

8. (Twice Amended) The soft link of claim 1 wherein the first member is a ~~bridle cord~~ ^{not shown.} and the second member is a canopy; wherein a first portion of said body member is disposed within a first opening defined by the bridle cord and a second portion of said body member is disposed within a second opening defined by the canopy when said first end is attached to said second end.

10. (Twice Amended) A soft link for connecting a first member to a second member, said soft link comprising:



RECEIVED
OCT 02 2002
GROUP 3600

Applicant: Bill J. Cog
Serial No. 09/879,419
September 25, 2002
Page 10 of 11

a flexible one-piece body member having a permanently looped first end and a permanently looped second end; and

a non-metal tab member secured to said second looped end;

wherein said body member is constructed from a rope material;

wherein said first end and said second end are removably attached to each other to connect the first member to the second member.

12. (Amended) The soft link of claim 10 wherein the first member is a group of parachute suspension lines and said second member is a riser; wherein a first portion of said body member is disposed within a first opening defined by the group of parachute suspension lines and a second portion of said body member is disposed within a second opening defined by the riser when said first end is attached to said second end.

13. (Amended) The soft link of claim 10 wherein the first member is a bridle cord and the second member is a canopy; wherein a first portion of said body member is disposed within a first opening defined by the bridle cord and a second portion of said body member is disposed within a second opening defined by the canopy when said first end is attached to said second end.

17. (Twice Amended) A soft link for connecting a first member of a parachute assembly to a second member of a parachute assembly, said soft link comprising:



Applicant: Bill J. Coe
Serial No. 09/879,419
September 25, 2002
Page 11 of 11

RECEIVED
OCT 02 2002
GROUP 3600

a flexible one-piece body member having a permanently looped first end and a permanently looped second end, said flexible body member having a plurality of bartack threads; and

a non-metal tab member secured to said second looped end;

wherein said body member is constructed from high strength fibers;

wherein said first end and said second end are removably attached to each other to connect the first member to the second member.

18. (Amended) The soft link of claim 17 wherein the first member is a group of parachute suspension lines and said second member is a riser; wherein a first portion of said body member is disposed within a first opening defined by the group of parachute suspension lines and a second portion of said body member is disposed within a second opening defined by the riser when said first end is attached to said second end.

19. (Amended) The soft link of claim 17 wherein the first member is a bridle cord and the second member is a canopy; wherein a first portion of said body member is disposed within a first opening defined by the bridle cord and a second portion of said body member is disposed within a second opening defined by the canopy when said first end is attached to said second end.